

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 BONN 07280 200449Z  
ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7832

C O N F I D E N T I A L BONN 07280

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EXDIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY VEST FROM AMBASSADOR STOESSEL

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SOPN, GW, US  
SUBJECT: FRG MEDIA CRITICISM OF THE US

REFS: A) STATE 98287  
B) BONN 8430 MAY 77  
C) BONN 10469 JUN 77

1. ALL OF US IN THIS EMBASSY ARE CONCERNED OVER THE  
NEGATIVE COVERAGE WHICH FRG MEDIA ARE GIVING THE CARTER  
ADMINISTRATION. WE HAVE BEEN WORKING ON THIS PROBLEM  
FOR MONTHS, AND WE ARE TAKING ACCELERATED STEPS TO  
COMBAT IT. THERE ARE ALREADY SOME INDICATIONS THAT  
GIVE ROOM FOR OPTIMISM.

2. PARTLY AS A RESULT OF TALKS WITH HENRY OWEN DURING  
HIS LAST TRIP TO BONN, THIS MISSION AND THE FRG ARE  
TAKING STEPS TO BRING LEADING FRG MEDIA FIGURES TO THE  
US, AND THEIR AMERICAN COUNTERPARTS TO THE FRG, FOR  
INTERVIEWS WITH TOP POLICYMAKERS IN BOTH CAPITALS.  
(FROM THE GERMAN SIDE, WE HOPE TO GET OTHER FIGURES  
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WITH THE CALIBER OF THEO SOMMER.) ALEX KLIEFORTH,  
OUR CPAO, WILL MEET NEXT WEEK WITH FRG SPOKESMAN KLAUS  
BOELLING, SPECIFICALLY TO DISCUSS HENRY'S RECOMENDA-  
TIONS AND TO REVIEW THE GENERAL MEDIA SITUATION.  
FOLLOWING THAT MEETING, WE SHALL SEND SPECIFIC  
RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPONSE TO YOUR REQUEST (PARA 3  
OF REF A).

3. AN EARLY CANDIDATE FOR SUCH A TRIP WOULD BE HANS-ERICH BILGES, A JOURNALIST FOR THE MASS-CIRCULATION BILDZEITUNG (BZ). YOU RECALL THAT GENSCHER'S TOP AIDE, KLAUS KINKEL, STRONGLY SUPPORTED BILGES' REQUEST FOR AN INTERVIEW WITH THE SECRETARY LAST YEAR (REF B AND C). AS FAR AS WE KNOW, BILGES NEVER GOT THE INTERVIEW. WITH A CIRCULATION OF 4.8 MILLION, BZ IS THE LARGEST NEWSPAPER IN EUROPE. IT IS CONSERVATIVE, SENSATIONALIST, AND USUALLY VERY FRIENDLY TO THE US. PLEASE NOTE THAT BZ IS NOT REPEAT NOT THE SAME AS BILD AM SONNTAG (BAS), THE PAPER WHICH TRIED TO PROMOTE A HUMAN-RIGHTS "AWARD" FOR THE PRESIDENT LAST YEAR IN A WAY THAT CAUSED PROBLEMS IN THE WHITE HOUSE STAFF AND DEPARTMENT. BAS, AS ITS NAME SUGGESTS, APPEARS WEEKLY (SUNDAYS); IT HAS A CIRCULATION OF 2.9 MILLION, THE LARGEST OF ANY WEEKLY PAPER IN EUROPE. BOTH BZ AND BAS ARE PUBLICATIONS OF THE SPRINGER CONCERN BUT THEY HAVE INDEPENDENT STAFFS. THEY HAVE A BOULEVARD FORMAT TAILORED FOR MASS CIRCULATION, NOT FOR IN-DEPTH REPORTING.

4. BEYOND OUR OWN EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN, THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT REALIZES THAT THERE IS A MEDIA PROBLEM IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS, AND IT HAS BEGUN EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION. WE HAVE ALREADY REPORTED RECENT PUBLIC REMARKS BY CABINET  
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MEMBERS, INCLUDING SCHMIDT, WHICH EMPHASIZE THE ENDURING AND POSITIVE ELEMENTS OF GERMAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS. ALSO, THE CHANCELLOR HAS BEGUN TO GIVE MORE INTERVIEWS TO AMERICAN JOURNALISTS. FOR EXAMPLE, HE MET A FEW DAYS AGO WITH MIKE GETLER OF THE WASHINGTON POST.

5. THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN CARRYING OUT A SELECTIVE PROGRAM OF BACKGROUNDEERS. FOR EXAMPLE, I MET ON APRIL 17 WITH A SMALL GROUP OF FRG JOURNALISTS FOR A BACKGROUND TALK ON USG POLICY AND OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. THAT SESSION WENT WELL, AND I BELIEVE THAT SUCH EFFORTS CAN OVER TIME IMPROVE THE CLIMATE OF MEDIA DISCUSSION, IF NOT DEFLECT CRITICISM ON SPECIFIC POINTS.  
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